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## NOTE ON *DAS* AND *WAS*

In the "Decennial Publications" of the University of Chicago (1902) there appeared an article by Professor Starr Willard Cutting "Concerning the Modern German Relatives *Das* and *Was*, in Clauses Dependent upon Substantivized Adjectives." Professor Cutting investigated the usage of Hauptmann, Heyse, Keller, Meyer, Nietzsche, Raabe, Schopenhauer, Spielhagen, Sudermann, and Wildenbruch, in all 7,368 pages of text.

In connection with some other investigations of Heine's grammatical usage the writer of the present article has also recorded his usage of *das* and *was* in clauses dependent upon substantivized adjectives, and offers the article as a contribution to the study of this question. All of Heine's prose works as contained in the Elster edition, in all 2,360 pages of text, have been examined and all the instances of his usage of *das* and *was* recorded.

Heine is above all a careful writer and a glance at his manuscript as prepared for the publishers shows very careful and painstaking correction. All through his writings we feel that he uses words with a full realization of their exact value and, in a question such as the one we are considering, we have good reason to believe that he reflects very well the usage of the first half of the nineteenth century.

For convenience in reference and comparison the cases found in Heine are divided as in Professor Cutting's article into the following groups:

I. *Was*-clauses:

- a) After superlatives (or *alles* or *einzig*).
- b) After positives or comparatives.

II. *Das*-(*welches*-) clauses:

- a) After superlatives (or *alles* or *einzig*).
- b) After positives or comparatives.

On pp. 20 and 21 of his article Professor Cutting states in summarized form the chief results of his investigation. As the usage of Heine does not in all respects agree with these results it will be interesting to study and note the exceptions which follow.

A condensed table is here given showing the number of instances of the usage in question in the authors investigated by Professor Cutting in comparison with the instances found in Heine.

	<i>Was</i> Sup. Ia	<i>Das</i> Sup. IIa	<i>Was</i> Pos. and Comp. Ib	<i>Das</i> Pos. and Comp. IIb
Nietzsche.....	9	10	4	33
Schopenhauer.....	15	10	18	97
All the remaining.....	29	4	22	26
Heine.....	18	4	12	22

	<i>Was</i> Sup., Comp., and Pos. Ia and Ib	<i>Das</i> Sup., Comp., and Pos. IIa and IIb
Nietzsche.....	13	43
Schopenhauer.....	33	107
All the remaining.....	51	30
Heine.....	30	26

Of the sixteen authors examined by Professor Cutting, in all 7,368 pages of text, two authors, Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, furnish 4,413 pages—more than half of the material investigated. Professor Cutting himself states that these statistics suggest a correspondence of cause and effect between the critical analytic habit of mind and a strong preference for the relative *das*. While it is true that both of these men are good stylists, still they are first and last exact writers and would hardly hesitate to sacrifice a customary usage, if, by the use of some other relative word, they would be able to express their thought with greater precision and clearness.

If then we omit Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, the reverse ratio of almost 2 to 1 in favor of *das*-(*welches*-) as given in Professor Cutting's results will be changed again in favor of *was* by a ratio of 51 to 30. As the table shows the ratio in Heine is 30 to 26 in favor of *was*.

The superlative category alone shows a very decided preference for *was*, 29 to 4 in authors examined by Professor Cutting (omitting Nietzsche and Schopenhauer) and 18 to 4 in Heine.

In view of what has been noted here there hardly seems to be any justification in changing the rules of usage ordinarily accepted.

These rules are summarized very well in Professor Curme's *German Grammar* and are practically as follows:

If the antecedent is a substantivized adjective in the superlative degree, the relative usually employed is *was*. Earlier, *das* and *welches* were also used here. This older usage is still found, especially in more elevated diction. If the antecedent is a positive or comparative, *was* may be used, though *das* is in these cases usually employed. It is very possible that in these cases there is a difference between *das* and *was*, *das* referring to something more definite—more definite at least to the author. We cannot in these cases determine absolutely whether *das* or *welches* is used as a survival of the older usage to indicate something general or indefinite or whether it is used to refer to something definite.

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